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Committee
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INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION HANDLING COMMITTEE
of the

UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

Office of the Chairman

IHC-MM 74-13/74

1 June 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR:

Chairman, Community Data Standards Panel

SUBJECT : Preparation of Staff Study on Community Data Standards

1. The Director, National Security Agency has agreed to my request that you serve as the Chairman of the Community Data Standards Panel, a working group of the IHC. All IHC participants have agreed to furnish members for the Panel.

2. In addressing the IHC meeting on 24 April 74, the DCI, Mr. Colby, and his Special Assistant, stressed the necessity to improve the methodologies and processes by which intelligence products are created and the formats in which they are presented to users. At a working level, we are all strongly aware of the rapid growth of computer and telecommunication capabilities that can serve intelligence project, system, sensor and organization managers. We are aware, also, that proliferation of unilaterally-developed mechanisms and procedures to organize, file, retrieve, disseminate and present intelligence information can result in great confusion when projected across organizational lines and throughout the intelligence community.

3. The Federal Government's data standardization program was established to forestall this sort of confusion. It is a requirement upon all parts of the Executive Branch that they make a significant, continuing attack on this problem. The intelligence community's basic reference on this subject is DCI Directive 1/15, dated 15 October 1969. It charges the IHC to establish methods and procedures for developing and maintaining data elements, data codes, and related features to be used in the intelligence community. The present reenergization of the IHC Community Data Standards Panel stems directly from a recommendation from Dr. Martin to the DCI to this effect.

4. The immediate task for the Panel is to prepare a staff study to be submitted to the DCI and the USIB at a reasonably early date. The study should marshal facts and conclusions from facts to describe for top community management - in non-technical language but objectively and persuasively - what data standards are all about, what the government-wide program calls for, where the intelligence community presently stands by way of accomplishments with respect to these activities to date, what important tasks remain unaccomplished, and what top management should now do about it, and why. The difficult challenge is to bring significance

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to the discussion of these technical details in a way to convince top management that it must give continuing attention and support to the implementation of a forceful and well-organized program with a total community focus. The conclusions and recommendations of the Panel's study should offer such a program.

5. One of the most important parameters that should be highlighted relates to the costs that may be anticipated by failure to act effectively on a broad scale, and the cost avoidance that is realistically to be anticipated through such timely action. The cost avoidance argument is likely to be the most effective rationale in calling on the DCI and the USIB for continuing future support.

6. To give further focus to the Panel's report, it should be borne in mind that in accordance with Presidential directive the DCI is giving special emphasis to improving the production of intelligence. He has spoken of the Production function as a major future regulator of intelligence activities, much as the Collection function has been in past years. To gain attention of top management, it must be made clear how a technical subject such as this one impacts on the analysis, production and presentation of intelligence.

7. The several agencies, departments and Services that make up the intelligence community have diverse missions, with different time frames and somewhat different customers for their mix of products and services. Some users of intelligence products are within the intelligence community itself - i.e., analysts serving other analysts and building and maintaining data bases. Other users are outside the intelligence community and are concerned with policy-making and operations in the foreign affairs and military fields as well as elsewhere in the civilian government structure. Some producers and users are concerned with analyses in a longer time frame and in considerable depth; others are concerned with conveying and presenting intelligence data for crisis management. While recognizing these differences among community members and their roles and responsibilities, nevertheless, they are a community, and their mutual interdependence is growing apace with the necessity to respond in a prompt and coordinated manner to increasingly complex and diversified user needs.

8. This staff study should be primarily community-oriented. It should present a holistic analysis of a community problem. Within this totality, it may recognize and discuss, as appropriate, factual differences pertinent to the individual community members, and these differences may suggest explanations for different approaches heretofore by individual agencies to data standards implementation. This study, hopefully, may offer suggestions as to how to give continuing recognition to important aspects of these necessary differences, while at the same time noting

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the need for community conformity in reasonable degree. For the Panel to understand and appraise this balance of interests, it may be appropriate to present factual evidence to characterize - at least by sampling - the present and future information flow among community organizations, and appraising the possibilities for improving (and the penalty of not improving) data standardization with respect to that flow both into and out of individual agencies.

9. The time frame discussed and projected in this study is not precisely fixed. It is necessary, on the one hand, to convince top management that the problem of data standards is one that requires immediate attention and improvement. The problem will magnify and increase in complexity over the next 5-10 years or so, and the increasing size of the problem, as information itself increases and the potential for its manipulation and display multiplies, makes it appropriate to project and describe some of the salient characteristics of future information flow and data handling with which the community must cope. A study done in 1973 for the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), by Georges Anderla, entitled Information in 1985, may be an interesting background document relative to the longer look at this problem. I am enclosing a copy. No doubt there are others.

10. In summary, the study should be prepared for a particular audience of senior community managers. It should be as direct and non-technical as possible. It should be sufficiently factual and complete to provide an adequate basis for community decision-making without further delay. It should take account of organizational differences, but it should present a concrete, realistic plan for coordinated community action. I suggest that it be organized in the traditional form of a Staff Study, since this format imposes its own discipline with respect to the marshaling of facts and the appraisal of alternatives.

11. My present view is that it is enough for this study to recommend a concrete plan of community action. I believe that an attempt to include a redrafting of DCI Directive 1/15 in the recommendations of this study could detract from the main focus of obtaining agreement to support an action plan. The study will undoubtedly lead to some working level conclusions as to how that document might be redrafted, but I suggest that for the present we assume such redrafting will be a separate follow-on exercise.


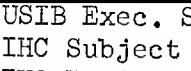
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Acting Chairman

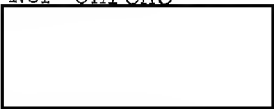

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